

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 00454 110825Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 NEA-10 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

OES-06 NAS-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 AID-05 INT-05 HUD-01

EB-08 /073 W

-----111024Z 121138 /23-12

R 110725Z MAR 77

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7372

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0454

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TPHY, CH

SUBJ: REFERENCE NEWS CARRIES REPORT ON INDIAN EARTHQUAKE
CONFERENCE

1. THE FEBRUARY 3 ISSUE OF CHINA'S RESTRICTED-CIRCULATION
DAILY WRAPUP OF FOREIGN PRESS NEWS TS'AN-K'AO HSIAO-HSI
(REFERENCE NEWS) CARRIES A LONG TANJUG PIECE ON THE 6TH
WORLD CONFERENCE ON ANTI-EARTHQUAKE CONSTRUCTION WHICH
CLOSED IN NEW DELHI ON JANUARY 27. THE ARTICLE'S LEAD
PARAGRAPH NOTED THAT THE EARTHQUAKE SPECIALISTS ATTENDING
THE CONFERENCE "UNANIMOUSLY HELD" THAT "CONTEMPORARY
SCIENCE HAS NO MEANS OF ACCURATE AND ERROR-FREE PREDIC-
TIONS THAT SEVERE QUAKE WILL OCCURE IN A CERTAIN PLACE
AT A CERTAIN TIME." THE ARTLCLE ALSO MENTIONS THAT
WHILE CHINESE SCIENTISTS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE
CONFERENCE, THE EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE SCIENTISTS HAD
BEEN STUDIED WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST. WHILE
CHINESE EARTHQUAKE SPECIALISTS HAD FAILED TO
PREDICT THE TANGSHAN QUAKE, THEY HAD REGISTERED
"CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS" IN FORECASTING TEN OTHER
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QUAKES.

2. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT CHINA THERE CONTINUES TO
BE INTENSE INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT OF EARTHQUAKES--
COUPLED WITH CONSIDERABLE FEAR AND EXTRAORDINARY
PRECAUTIONS. DURING RECENT VISIT TO SIAN, WHERE
EARTHQUAKE WARNINGS HAD PUT RESIDENTS IN THE STREETS

LAST AUTUMN, USLO OFFICER OBSERVED NEW ANTI-QUAKE SHELTERS ALONG ALL MAJOR ARTERIES. CHINA TRAVEL SERVICE (CTS) GUIDE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SHELTERS WERE MERELY PRECAUTIONARY. BUT EVENING STROLLS CONFIRMED THAT NEARLY ALL WERE IN FACT OCCUPIED. IN NANKING, SIMILAR CONSTRUCTION ON A SMALLER SCALE CONTINUES. THERE THE CTS GUIDE MAINTAINED THAT THE ACTIVITY WAS SPONTANEOUS, A RESULT OF "POPULAR FEAR" FOLLOWING REPORTS ON THE DEVASTATION AT TANGSHAN. AND IN PEKING CONSTRUCTION OF SEMI-PERMANENT SHELTERS ALSO CONTINUES.

3. THE DECISION BY THE REFERENCE NEWS EDITORS TO PUBLISH THE ARTICLE ON THE INDIAN EARTHQUAKE CONFERENCE PRESUMABLY REFLECTS BOTH OFFICIAL AWARENESS OF WIDESPREAD CONCERN AND A DESIRE TO MAKE PLAIN, ALBEIT SEMI-OFFICIALLY, THAT THE PEKING AUTHORITIES MAKE NO CLAIM OF ABILITY TO PREDICT A NEW QUAKE.
GATES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, EARTHQUAKES, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PEKING00454
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770084-0460
Format: TEL
From: PEKING
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770369/aaaacijr.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7ec4bab9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3135095
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REFERENCE NEWS CARRIES REPORT ON INDIAN EARTHQUAKE CONFERENCE
TAGS: PINT, TPHY, OCON, CH, XX
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7ec4bab9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009